

# High Summer

John Goto

Visual art 2001

John Hudson



*Pasturelands, 2000-2001*

**John Goto is unashamedly a digital artist. These works are 100% digital prints. He does them and does not apologise for them. For all their reliance on high-tech photo-digital image manipulation software though, they retain a high artiness.**

This is quite deliberate. He captures or recreates an idealised classical landscape and litters them with things and people from the modern age. **High Summer** recalls the 18th century English gardens and 17th century French landscape paintings of Poussin and Lorrain (we do see the subtle use of painting effects and filters). Yet it is surrounded by all the troubles of the modern age: BSE, foot-and-mouth, the troubled management of the countryside and genetically modified foods.

I feel that sometimes Goto sees himself as an 18th-century Tory radical battling against the Whigs (Tony Blair and New Labour surely); and despite my own suspicion of political artist statements, I believe that there is a genuine

anger here. In **Farmer** we witness a suicide, perhaps not just a death of an individual but another death of an industry and a way of life. In **Harvest** we see the corporate takeover of the countryside in an Ed Rushca-like piece, perhaps making a jibe at notions of rebranding Britain. In **Beach** we see hints of class divisions as working class people enjoy a summer break by the sea, and a place where the nation's waste is dumped.

These works are highly hallucinatory dream-dramas that satirise our relationship to nature. In the end, when another industry disappears and another way of life comes to an end, we will be left with a heritage-industry version of that reality. Much of the countryside is already fake, a manmade facade, as fake as the Greek temples that occupy Goto's work. We are already gazing on fake ruins.

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